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NOT ENOUGH LOVE

by

Janet L. C. Cincurak

A Master's Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through English Language, Literature and Creative Writing
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2002

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TYLA

for M and B

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Brandt, Dr. Ditsky, Dr. Kulisek, and Dr. Jacobs for agreeing to be on my defence committee. Thank you Dr. Brandt for the time you took out to discuss my work with me, for your encouragement, and for your editorial suggestions. I enjoyed our conversations and found them to be beneficial. I am indebted to Dr. Ditsky for guiding my writing through the majority of my undergrad and aiding in shaping my writing into what it has become, as has Dr. Brandt. Dr. Ditsky thank you for sharing your humour throughout my undergrad and graduate studies. I appreciate Dr. Kulisek for never minding my interrupting him, for his kindness and for taking time to sit on my committee. Many thanks to Dr. Jacobs for chairing my defence, for always having a smile and sharing the same geographical experience of flat land.

Thank you to my 590 creative writing class, for all the constructive praise and criticism, for the pool game, and friendship. Thanks also to all of my fellow classmates in my creative writing undergrad classes.

Bryan, thank you for editing everything over and over, for your support and belief in me and my writing, and for always being there.

For my Dad, thank you for reading me fairytales, being a clerk, and for solving the many computer problems that occurred.

Mom and Mary thank you both for always reading my creative work, no matter how strange you may have thought it.

Thank you to my family for their support.

And to all people that I have encountered in my life, especially those in grade school, thank you for the experience.

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And nobody gets hurt

basically all you have to do
is take off all of your clothes
real slow like
and do a little jiggle
then me and my buddies
will make sure you see
another today
unfortunately
we can't promise anything
for your man
unless you can get your
little girl to do the same

Purple painted smile

i count to ten
and then you disappear
on some other planet
like your parent's house
a place i can't go into
where they offer you
a glass of sugar water or
i don't know

i don't understand
why you keep dyeing
your smile
the same colour
as your painted purple
nail polish
but you look pretty
until i count to ten

and then you're gone

Dead end

At the third beat I stop counting and tell you how much my aeroplane weighs and when you inquire as to its health I begin to be suspicious of your being secretly in love with the aeroplane and not me. You always seem more interested in the plane.

They begin again and try to follow everyone else as they bump elbows with yet another couple when they are trying so hard to learn the dance, they find the only thing they seem to be grasping is how to tick the other couples off, which is better than nothing.

There's a line between fine and crazy and let me tell you, I'm there, so please don't push me into the lake, I'll drown if you do.

They keep screaming and the kettle keeps whistling and I can't shut either of them off. The voices in my head won't stop and the whistling kettle is in the neighbour's kitchen.

I'm not getting anywhere and I wonder why because I'd like to. I'd like to climb into that aeroplane that you're so fond of and leave you, the kettle and the neighbours behind. But I'm stuck on the ground, watching you take off down the runway in my aeroplane.

Where is this going? Like my life, nowhere.

Off the shore in the desert

I left you swimming
in the middle of nowhere
I don't know why
I didn't turn back
at least wave
because I left you
there
drowning in the desert

There's a chicken in my head

it's no joke that I'm standing where I'm standing
I'm here by choice
because you see the distance between me
and the next guy
allows for just enough time
for me to get away
before he can catch me
judging by his weight and size
and by my speed
of course
but there's really no reason
no good reason
for me to strategically place myself so
but I do it
because you never can tell
who's beside you
and I'm no brave man

What could have been, but wasn't

there was so much love in this house
so much love for a little girl
who was only six when she died
and ran like her father
you could just see her
running inside the house
into her daddy's arms
and then she's twelve
and still running
but faster
with lots of other girls
running beside her
trying to make it to the finish line
and now she's twenty and still running
races
with a Nick on the side lines
this boy she met in college
sitting beside her parents
cheering her on
and she tries to stay in front of the pack
but she can't catch up
to the other runners
because she's only six
and still running into her daddy's arms

In a dressing room

Two men. One looking in the mirror. The other standing beside him.

You see, my fine boy, what's a rainbow, if you can't smoke it? Nothing but just a bunch of pretty colours bent over.

You know, Fred, you're a pretty messed up guy.

On the contrary, I'm the one with his head on straight. Who do you think you are to marry a girl and think it's all going to be as right as rain?

I know what I'm about.

Yeah, but do you know what she's about?

Why can't you have a little faith?

Oh, I have faith. I believe that you'll be shaking me awake one bright young morning and your shirt will be covered with her stains and you'll be wanting me to clean up the mess you left.

It's not like that. I'm not like that.

But aren't you? You're another Dorian Gray waiting to happen. And I won't let you do it, my boy, I've seen too many of your messes. And she's a lovely girl. Too lovely for me to watch you destroy her with your own hands.

You're a real pal, do you know that?

I am, aren't I. Now, will you give me a hand with this lighter. You know I'm all thumbs when it comes to lighting a cigarette.

Light the thing yourself.

Where are you going?

To break it off with Agnes, if that's okay with you?

Oh sure, it's the right thing to do.

Yeah, whatever.

Slim pickings

it's slim pickings for those in the boat who just won't let go of their paddles and stop for a break and it's slim pickings for those in another boat who always let go of their paddles for a break because then they're both stuck in the rapids forever almost falling out of the boat, the dinghy. if only the people in each boat would take a break, one at a time, then there would be slim pickings for nobody and they would all have passed out of the rapids.

You can eat the fork

uh
I foresee some
difficulty
but you're
welcome
to try
if you like

Me and the sun

the pale morning and
the ghost of your face
indicates a waning
of my state of mind which is none too good and
of the sun which has yet to appear
according to the meteorologists
there will be a full eclipse but it seems to me like an eternal twilight
and
there in the twilight the sun but there will be no sun today like the sun that once
revealed your smile
your shade of lipstick
and you the way you were
but are not anymore

The woods were lovely

It was that time of year just before the harvest. When it was just too cold to go outside without a coat. And the woods were almost naked. From a distance a blur of brown and yellow melding into the horizon. And that's all she could remember. That it was cold and that there were woods in the distance. And then nothing. Her memory had left her from there. Or perhaps it hadn't. That's all she had been staring at these past three years. Woods in the distance. And that was life to her. Staring at the woods. Watching the seasons pass.

They had said she was crazy. Her own family. Her parents couldn't take care of her any more and had put her here. HazyLane Sanitarium. Or Treeample. That's what she called it. And that's what it was, a place beside the trees. Neighbouring woods.

She had spent three years in the place taking the pills they gave her and looking out her window at the woods. And when she first came she thought them lovely. The loveliest thing about the place until she started to watch the woods from the window and then she did not think them so lovely.

The other patients who only saw the woods when they went on a walk outside to the border of the property could not understand why she thought them anything but lovely. Especially in the fall, when they were so colourful, little bits of dotted red blending in with the yellows, greens and browns. But she seemed to hate the woods the most at these times and would turn away from the window. And none of the other patients could understand this. Why she hated this time of year so much. Why she had turned away from her window which had such a lovely view. It was the time of year when the doctors

would release the patients they thought cured. The patients who had spent so many years there that they could no longer remember any home but that. It was these patients that were let go. The patients whose coverage or money had run thin. Packed up and sent to the door and picked up by a car that drove off into the distance, into the woods, and came back empty.

None of the other patients knew what was in the woods. Why the discharged patients were always taken in that direction. The other patients never wondered why it was always the old patients who left in the fall. That none of the younger patients were ever let go. They never noticed how remarkably like a hearse the car was that drove the discharged patients away. But of course all the other patients were crazy. Just like her family thought she was. Because she wanted to marry who she wanted to marry and not who they wanted her to marry. Because she was too willful they called her crazy and sent her to this place where the only piece of loveliness was the woods in the distance. But the woods betrayed her too when she happened to notice the shovel when the driver opened the trunk to put the patient's bags in.

That was the last time she went outside. The wind biting her skin. And she opened the trunk and saw the shovel and a stone with a date on it. And then she turned around and went back in, up to her room, and just stared out the window. Looking at the woods because she wanted to and then because that was all there was to look at. That was where she would go one autumn day. And that's how she spent the past three years. That's all she remembers. That's all she cares to remember. The cold. The woods. Dark and deep.

Asking for the flower and ending up with the thorn

and he said he'd leave all of his testosterone outside the door
when they walked into the theatre to see Little Women
but he didn't
like all the other times
he kept all his testosterone with him
whatever it was
he kept whatever it was that he needed to make fun of
whatever she liked
even the Kleenex box she bought the one time
because she needed to blow her nose
he laughed at that too
and she laughed
she laughed herself into crying

Of course they're all dead now

we buried them out back
beside the old oak
so the dog
could come and pee on them

Saying goodbye, all over again

The last thing I ever wanted to hear you say was, don't leave me. I was always going to leave. I was only here for a little while. It's the nature of my business. And it's time for me to go home to Pepsiland. You know that. We agreed to it from the beginning. No attachment. No sad goodbyes. Just a pleasant smile and a handshake, like we just met, without any regrets in parting.

I tell you goodbye, the first time. I try to make it sound final. But I can't leave. And I know I'm going too far for me to expect you to be happy. I know that. I know I have to go. It's going too far. I should have left sooner. Because there never could be an us. Just a you and me, meeting in between stations.

Don't stand there crying. I'm not asking much. Just go. Forget the goodbye thing. I can't stand looking at you standing on the platform, smiling and waving. You need a tissue. I don't even know if you can still see me with those wet eyes of yours.

All I'm asking for is for you to be strong. To at least pretend that I'm not killing you in leaving. Why do you have to go back on your word? You said you'd do it. You said you could do it. Do it. Because I can't keep getting off. The train is already moving.

It's time for the final wave. Pull yourself together. I don't want to remember you like this. Licking your lips. Rubbing your nose. Turning your back because you can't look at me anymore.

And as the train pulls out of the station I watch you step off the platform and keep walking. That's all I'll remember. Your stepping off the platform. The motion of the train as I take my seat. I close my eyes and try to forget the rest.

Give me an apple

There was once a man who ate all the apples that his wife gave him and that's how he got into trouble in the first place because he ate so many apples that he ended up sitting on the toilet for the rest of his life and that's how humans got into excretion because one man got it into his mind to eat way too many apples but it wasn't his fault no it was his wife's just like it's only the fault of those who created any grammar at all that it must be followed but that doesn't make any sense which is excellent because if it made sense well then there wouldn't be any reason to stop and think this person who wrote this is an idiot and that would be taking away credit from the author to not be able to be an idiot which she is and she sometimes enjoys being called an idiot too like most idiots and like other idiots she sometimes minds too much that she is only seen as an idiot but it saves face and spares the author from having to appear at least a little inclined to intelligence because it doesn't matter if the author is intelligent apparently it only matters that the reader can read and the author is able to spell words not so well and to type which is even worse because it is such a shame that the world should be subjected to anything so horrible as an idiot who can type.

It all happened at the end of the dessert

i swear i swear by my hair that i never hit her or her hammer
i never hit her with her hammer or with a laundry basket
she was there when i got there at the end of dessert and so was her hair and the
hammer it was a snare a mouse trap i fell into it because she was there
where i had not expected her to be

and there i was right there picking up the hammer when you came in
took the hammer out of my hands the bloody hammer
took my hands and put them in manacles

so there you were the one holding the hammer and i was the one in the slammer
while you got away with murder
you the one i saw swinging the hammer when i got there
but here i am in manacles staring between bars thinking about the man holding the
hammer the candlestick the revolver the plastic bag

the police charged me for strangling her with or without the hammer

This is what they do when they are trained to point a gun and shoot

flat on the belly in the darkness. and you'd like to take a whizz. but you can't because your belt is stuck. and you can't hear anything after that first blast. if only you hadn't learnt to shoot a gun. then you wouldn't have to be here. lying in the dirt. in nomansland. wondering what will happen to you next? after you get out of here. if you get out of here.

But I can't really call you a stiff, it wouldn't be polite

in the middle of the night
your careless blueberry hair is
splayed on the bed
as you hug a shaggy orange pillow
to your chest
and looking at the ceiling fan
you don't notice
the missing phone or
the cut curtain cord

you lie there naked
staring at the fan
your blueberry hair carefully arranged
curtain cord coiled tightly around your hair
holding it in a ponytail
but of course you don't notice
the purple ring forming
around your neck
in the middle of the night

You can ask the mosquito

I go around in this shirt
that says I gave blood in
Elliot Lake
and boy I sure did
but I don't know
how much
that
only the mosquito can say

A no show

I won't hold my breath because you never seemed to listen to me anyhow. And what's the point of my waiting for you to drive me home when you're always a no show and all I ever do is walk around waiting for you to pick me up. I've become a one girl parade, without a permit. Which doesn't help me much when I wake up with hideous breath and take another pain pill for my back that isn't getting any better because I keep walking around, waiting for you to pick me up.

There's just so much sex

It could have happened at any time but it didn't. And when they came to the point when it was finally time for it to happen they didn't want it to happen because it had lost all its meaning and had become a thing casual and overdone. And who could say if it was the media, the movies, the magazines, the tube, the music, or themselves that had killed it. Maybe it was their own fault because they had decided to wait and had waited too long and grew pessimistic about it or maybe it was the media because they had painted it as a thing casual.

But who were they? Well, they were just another two people that had met and tripped over love somewhere along the way. What was it, well it was sex. Sex that became just another thing, like in an advertisement where if they had bought the right chocolate bar they'd get to have sex. And according to the media or whatever, that's all they needed to have it. Why did they wait? Well, at first they waited because they thought it, funny enough, was a gift meant to give to each other, and then they waited just to go against the times, and then they waited because it had lost all meaning and wasn't worth the trouble to have anymore. So they gave up waiting and they gave up it too.

And in the end they gave each other up. Because what would they become if they stayed together but just another ad for sex.

You're so like a rose

every time I hear the train in your voice
I always feel like I'm going up north
back to Cornwall where there is a little town
just a half hour drive away
and it's called Alexandria
but I can never think of what it is
that reminds me of the north
of Alexandria
except the train in your voice

I'm always heading home
when I hear your voice
because it reminds me so much of home
the slowness of your words reminds me
of the tractors plowing the fields
and I feel like I'm climbing the Mulberry tree again
when I hear your voice

you're so like a rose
and I can't figure out why
except that the rose must be in your voice
slowly unfolding like a train that sways while in motion
as you tell me over and over again
but I never seem to hear exactly what you're saying
I only know that I like the sound of your voice

Just before I walk out on you

Until you close your eyes don't tell me it's unfair for me to have a cigarette when you've just quit smoking and I've been at home all day with the kids and scrubbing the crap off the toilets.

And if you're going to close your eyes to me you might as well not speak at all because my head aches from hearing the kids scream all day that they hate me. Because I don't have any food.

Go ahead and close your eyes but don't expect me to be here when you open them because I'm sick of your going out everyday and coming back with empty hands.

Just close your eyes after you've taken my last cigarette out of my mouth to smoke it yourself because you can't stand the fact that I might actually enjoy smoking it.

Close your eyes. And when you open them I'll be gone.

A killer for detail

You say hello and I say there's nothing like a sweet pickle to tide you over and you smile because you think you understand who I am but you don't and it doesn't matter to you really what I say because I'll leave you with a smile on your face and by then you will have understood what I meant by your being such a sweet pickle to tide me over with

.....
It's so refreshing to meet one of your own kind when I mention how everything goes bananas they understand what it means It's so refreshing to see one of your own kind because they are the only ones who really understand the urge to take another human being to the point where they are no longer breathing they understand it's all in the technique the style of how to bring a human to that point that matters

.....
It's so relaxing really it's uncanny how much like knitting it is you have to have a pattern in order to do it just right and get away with it and it's the most relaxing thing in the world to tie everything else into knots and to have those knots and to use them to suffocate the life out of another

.....
There's nothing quite like those eyes staring back at you they stare at you as if they knew all along that you were going to do it when they only just met you on the street in some alley corner and their lifting up their skirt for you and then later all there is is those eyes those pretty eyes

Oops

Johnny: What can I tell you, hey?
They hit the plane when it wasn't
even off of the ground.
What am I supposed to say to that?
What kind of an excuse am I gonna give
for a plane bein' shot when it wasn't
even off the ground? Turbulence? Birds?

Freddy: They thought it would be more diplomatic
to shoot down the plane
then to let it take off
into an uncertain air
space.

Harry: And yeah, I shot down the plane.
So what, big deal?
Wow is this gum ever stale.
Give me another stick!

Sam: That's all that's fit to print.

There's no going back

my father was a miner
and my husband was a miner
like my brother
who was a miner
and they all died in the mines
and left me out to dry
in the sunlight

The one man show

Two men standing around a table. A chair is pulled up to the table. Two other chairs are behind the two men.

I can't stand it anymore. Give me the gun.

There's no way I'm going to give you this gun. You won't use it.

What makes you think I won't?

You never have before.

I've never asked for it before.

That's true.

Yah. Now give me the gun. C'mon, pass it over.

You wouldn't do it. You won't even make a blasted cup of tea.

Give me the tea bag. I'll show you.

Here. *Jerry gives him tea bag.*

Sam takes it. Sits on a chair. Does nothing.

Aw, c'mon now. Aren't you going to make me a cup of tea?

Sam sits and stares at the gun.

What is it this time? You forget how to make it? I've heard that one before.

Hey, Jerry, why don't you just do me a favour and sit on it. I've never made a cup of tea in my entire life. What makes you think I'm gonna start doing it now?

Oh, you know. I thought maybe once, just once, you might make the tea.

Wake up, Jerry. When was the last time you had a cup of tea? Huh? It was before you met me. I have never seen you once have a cup of tea.

That's because you won't make any.

Jerry. Here's the tea bag. Go make your stinking tea. You can take a bath in it for all I care, but give me the bloody gun.

What is it this time, Sam? Your wife is leaving you again? Your dog died?

I was born, isn't that enough? Every moment that I have spent on this accursed earth has been a moment of pain. I can't remember once, just once, a happy moment.

It hasn't been all that bad, has it?

Jerry, when your fifth wife leaves you for another man and the priest won't even listen to your confession?

Oh, c'mon Sam, you've never been to confession. You're not even Catholic.

That's what I mean. How's a guy gonna go to confession when he can't even become a Catholic? This is it, Jerry. I'm tellin you. I failed everything else in life. I'm not going to fail my character. I mean look at the lousy lines I have to deliver. The lack of diction. I'm putting the audience to sleep. You don't need me. You're a one man show. You told me so yourself.

I'm going to make a pot of tea.

Fine. But leave the gun.

Bends down and pulls a gun out of his sock. Puts it on the table.

You won't use it, Sam.

Jerry, I can't do this anymore. I can't pretend that what I'm saying has any meaning anymore. Look. No one's listening. The audience is sleeping. Go make your cup of tea.

Jerry leaves the room. Five minutes later there is a whistling sound.

Sam grabs the gun.

Jerry comes back in the room holding a pot of tea.

Would you like some? It hasn't steeped yet, but, personally, I like my tea to be coloured water. Do you want a cup?

Sam puts the gun in his mouth, takes off the safety, and pulls the trigger. The gun goes off. He falls to the ground.

Jerry sits the tea pot on the table. Looks down at Sam and then takes a chair and pulls it up to the table. Sits at the table. Looks for a cup. Gets up and leaves the room. Comes back in with two cups. Pours tea into them. Leaves the room. Enters carrying a sugar bowl and a jar of cream. Pours cream into one cup. Puts two cubes of sugar into the other cup. Picks up the one with the cream in it and sips.

She wore an elephant grey bathing suit

there was a something to the way she swam
it just knocked you out
it was so hilarious and carefree
too carefree
no one should ever be that carefree
it was wrong
and that was her trouble
she should never have taken me up
on a late afternoon swim
on the west side of the beach
near the cliffs and caves
i couldn't help myself
she was so carefree
and she wore this bathing suit
it was elephant grey
but it was flattering to her figure
it made her look like a pickerel
a lithe pickerel that was her beauty
but she couldn't swim like one
no she was an awkward swimmer
that's what made it so easy
that's why i chose her
because she was too carefree
that and her elephant gray bathing suit
and we walked over to the west beach and waded out
into the deeper water
we swam out to the cliffs
shssssh.
and later in the evening i swam back
leaving her silent
you quiet
tucked away in one of the caves

The mechanics of the song

When your guitar kicks in just let me know and I'll have the song tuned up for you. It just needs a little adjustment in the bass clef area, something to do with the flats and there is a bit of a leak in the chorus, but don't worry I can fix it for a buck fifty- five or maybe a couple hundred, I'll let you know when your guitar kicks in.

When you went

I thought I had cried for you
I stopped everyday to take ten minutes to let it out and
cry for the you I had lost
but you still sit there on the desk staring back at me as if
I never felt a thing for you
as if I hadn't broken down once
when it took me weeks to get a hold of myself
and somehow get back to work
get back to life
and I still can't look at your picture without losing it
and using up yet another box of tissues
to mop up my face, my eyes

Leave your troubles on the road

Slow down, if I wanted to die I would have hired an assassin.

Let me save you the trouble, all I have to do is turn into the next tree.

Oh please spare me from this idiot of a man.

And just a few months ago it was all honey and sweetie.

Yeah, and a few months ago I didn't know you so well.

Neither did I. I had no idea I would turn out to be such a jerk of a husband. Now, how did that happen?

It could have been from driving the car the way you do. I'm surprised you haven't been in more accidents.

There have only been the two.

What a record. The next time I get married I'm gonna check the guy's police record.

The next time you get married? Isn't that presuming a little?

Not at all. Anyone could see from the way you drive that it's only a matter of months.

So much for love, honour and cherish. Well, could I at least assist you in your next choice?

No. You'd probably pick out a dummy.

Exactly my preference.

Enter the tomb

We are none of us actors. And it doesn't surprise me that there are still tickets available for last year's show. It's bad business, but it's business. The art of staying afloat in a sinking ship.

The end of the affair

I'm really no better than you
I'm worse
And all this time I thought I was better
That I could be better than I am
But I'm not I'm worse
If I had just not gone over to the house
If I could have just not done that
I would have been better off
There wouldn't be a naked man lying on the floor
Staring up at the ceiling
By now staring at nothing because he can no longer see
And to know that I did that to him
All in a minute
A man who had promised in front of God and everybody
That he wouldn't but he did
And I thought I was better than you
Because I didn't cheat on you
But I was wrong
And I'm sorry sorry you had to cheat on me sorry I came home early
Found you there found her there getting dressed
Sorry that we ever had any knives in the house

Tripping over the sun again

my heart bleeds for those who travel and expect to land in love when they only end up on another April Fools. you can't depend on poor old Valentine to break your heart, no you need a girl to do that. and that's just the beginning when I think of it. I'm always tripping over the sun when I try to fly into the Milky Way. that's why I stick to the [politics of the season] until it turns to raining and I wonder if I would be lucky enough to make it to Pluto where I've always wondered if there were clouds. it breaks me into three knowing that I have no vote when it comes to the important things, like the weather. and I always end up on a train heading for Valentines and land, like all the other guys, on April Fools.

Every time i'm around you i always find that "if" comes to mind

if i could play the piano for you
it would still be out of tune
and i would always play in the minor key
because it would be the only key that the piano and i would be in tune with

if i could whistle you a tune
it would fall flat
because i couldn't whistle on key
and all you would have is a song that wasn't a song at all

if i could tell you how much i love you
you wouldn't stay around to listen
and i would only be telling myself again
something i always knew you never cared to hear

He said

the thin line between you and me
is not working very well
because it's too repelling and
it makes me realize how close I am
to walking off the page
because you're just not worth the wait honey
so so long and fare thee well
and don't forget to feed the fish at four-thirty
every day mind

She said

And your reasons for sticking around keep getting thinner and thinner till I can spread them like jam on my sandwich so why don't you just do me the favour and leave right now and save yourself the trouble of the dear jane, it would be so much the better for me if I said goodbye to you now as opposed to reading some stupid letter later and crying over a piece of paper that said what I already know right now so just say your goodbyes right now if you don't mind. And don't forget your fish because I'm not going to feed it if you leave it.

I can't remember to forget you

I can't stand it anymore. Images of her drifting into my paper cup. She's dead. Yet I can't seem to kill her off. Fold and place all those memories in a box. Burn the pictures. Everywhere I go I see her there. In a café. When I go to pay the bill I feel her watching me from across the table. I look up and she's gone. She's died all over again. Maybe that's my problem. I keep killing her off. I keep having to remember that she's dead. If only I could go through the rest of my life pretending that she was alive. But I can't seem to get into the illusion. Or at least I can't seem to hold on to the illusion. I keep relapsing into the reality that she won't ever come home again. She won't ever be in my life. Not anymore.

When the music stops and you're left without a chair

Walking with a white glove in my hand because I like gloves and hate white. Hate that you gave me back my white glove after you had stolen it for so long. Especially since it is no longer white, considering the amount of lemonade that has been spilled on it, it's a wonder that it isn't pink, since that's what the lemonade was, but no it's yellow, like your eyes. And to think I used to call them amber drops when really they look like dog pee in the snow.

Well, you're no miss virtue, letting me walk away with your glove, when you perfectly well knew that I had it all along, and never doing anything about it. And just because I took your glove doesn't mean we're married or anything. So there's no need to look as if I kissed you for any particular reason.

Poker is the rage here

Like that poet
I was half in love with death
but only in school
elementary
to be specific

The only thing I won
in grade school
was an education
a chocolate bar
and three dollars
in a poker game

If I could have
kept a straight face
I might have won more
but back then
and even now
for me
it's all about knowing
when to quit
which unfortunately
I'm not very good at

I was much better at a game
like red rover
which was all about
running headlong
into the arms of
your opponent
and trying to break
past those arms

That was the only thing
that I was ever good at
running
breaking through arms
and when someone
from the opposite side
tried to run through me
I'd hold the person's hand

who was next to me so tight
it hurt
for them
but that type of pain
didn't mean much to me
it was temporary
besides
I was as competitive
as all get out
back then
and had learned
from older brothers
that you play by the rules
and be strong

I wished everyone
who I ever raced with
luck
at least twice
before the race began
in hopes of trying
to make up for
having to compete
against them

When they are left to shift for themselves

it's no longer a dance when you don't have a partner
it's a careful dodging of people
so as not to actually have to look another person in the eyes
and have them look into your eyes
no, you wouldn't want that
because all your life you've been out there, alone, pretending to have a partner on a
dance floor when you don't
and all you're really doing is walking around with your head down in circles

Othello had to come in on cue

Poor little Judy and Clare
the one a Desdemona
the other her Emilia
played their parts for Joe
the Iago
and lost their lives
with makeup all over their faces
without any smiles on

In the every day way

Man:

So what do you think of
the apartment, Honey?

Woman:

Give me a wrecking ball
and I'll show you what
I think of it.

In spanish

I tell you
it haunts me

and all I kept telling her
to do was shut up
because she refused to speak to me
in my own language
I couldn't understand
a word she was saying
but she kept coming up to me
and speaking to me
in some foreign language
moving her hands
crying
looking to me for something
and telling me I don't know what
and I never found out what she
was trying to tell me
I just got so sick of her hands
touching my arms
her crying face
I took out my gun and shot her
right in the face
in the middle of her trying to
tell me something

I can still hear her
she still hasn't shut up

In nature

your heart
like my heart
is like the
robin egg
I left outside
easily broken
and with
great difficulty
repaired
and always
with
scars
having lost its
yolk in the
breaking

Don't look back in anger, or don't look back at all

I never thought I'd make it back here. To a place I had left, for good. So many years ago. I tried not to look back at it in anger. I tried to forget it altogether. But it never seemed to leave me, even though I walked out of the door years ago. I never really left it.

There is no cure for the kind of cancer that this place has. A breed of its own. A disease of the mind that infects me. Makes me sick, all over again. Because the disease is chronic and has never really let go of me, nor I of it. And this cancerous disease is what was said and can't be taken back. This disease has become me, a nobody who has cooties, lice, and is a fussbucket. And I'll never be anything else because they told me who I was and I still believe them. This is a place that I have, somehow, never been able to get over.

And, yet, here I am again in this old familiar playground that has changed a little. The monkey bars that were by the fence are gone, replaced by a patch of grass. The monkey bars I remembered, fondly. The staff has removed the only piece of happiness I had experienced here.

So, I'm here. Even though I strive, with all of my monkey bar climbing skills, to remain as far away from here as I could. I'm here. For the rest of my life, it seems. I'm here to catch the disease all over again. Because it never went away. To watch others catch it. A child's disease that doesn't leave even when you have become an adult.

And that's all I have to look forward to, for the rest of my life. So, I look back as hard as I can, on the good things, the memories that are barely endurable. And I forgive my classmates, the kids I played with, I have to, all over again. With the thought that the only thing I learned from being in this institution, was to forgive. And to keep forgiving. Having never learned to forget.

Hilda

it seems so many years
since i last saw her
silent
still
as if a floating body in the ocean
and looking at a her
who was not her at all
she had gone
somewhere else
beyond me
on another planet
another eternity

and i wonder how much of her i remember
sixteen years i grew
as i watched her grow older
change a growing spirit a shrinking body
i remember her differently now
than i did six years ago

six years where i have grown
and she has seemed to stay the same

in death life no longer has a hold on her
or does it i remember her differently
i remember less of her
because there is no longer any her to remember
just the memory of her

of a her floating in an ocean
on a hospital bed
a woman i had loved
i felt her forehead still
warm
but she wasn't there
not really
her body was
a body that was still warm

the her i had known was gone
eight a.m when we got the call

and she was already gone
when we got there

just a body floating in an ocean
where memory could not follow
unless a hospital bed remembers
the blue rosary moving in her hands
her old brown leather stool
her smile
the way she held a baby

no it would only remember her body
floating in an ocean

Tiptoeing past the lion in your heart

She said that you were like a bullet when it came to taking shots at me. And I've heard from some other guy that you still haven't gotten over why I ever came up to you in the first place. I don't know either of them very well but seem to be awfully well acquainted with them. The other guy and she make me feel less sure of who you are and why I'm even still with you. But then I remember that you warned me that you had a lion in your heart that liked to eat at anything that got near it.

It never really did get any better, this thing I had with you. Because the animal inside of you never learned to stop eating at me and I learned to stop holding on to a man who hit me for everything he ever did wrong.

I'm not a waitress

I'm not ashamed to admit
having this crazy obsession
with the colour blue
where I once even tried
to cover my face with blue
eyeshadow with ill effect
and that's why I could
never paint my toe nails
I'm not a waitress™ red
which would probably look
much better than powder face
blue
but there it is
I've always leaned toward blue

So where's that happy face he gave you?

The fake plastic smile, it can reach you, when your picture is taken and the only thing to be afraid of in such cases is your eyes, because they can't even pretend to be fake like your smile.

It's long since we've had hope

been waiting for reinforcements for months and they haven't showed up yet. and the trenches are full of blood and the stinking smell of the dead. we've almost surrendered seven times, but the captain is holding out for a promotion before we move out. he hasn't heard anything, so we keep waiting and waiting for the next man to die. that's all we're waiting for now, death, and, if we're lucky, the captain's promotion.

What I saw on my way to somewhere else

Saw this man once. He was sitting inside a cardboard box, in the middle of the summer, parked on the edge of an alley. And all I could do was just stare at him as he climbed out of his box and pulled up his ugly brown pants. He wasn't much to look at. So thin. So dirty. And the dog that came up to him was all bones. They were a regular pair, the two of them. All brown, scraggly and gaunt. They looked like they needed to be buried. I never saw them again. Never went back to that place, because I had no reason.

And all before the wedding

First it was the ring which was
too big and then too small
and it's still too small
then it was all about
what sort of music we should have
and the cake and the texture of the icing
the flowers, the dress which took forever
to find, and all I can tell you
is that you better not be asking
me to go looking for wedding undergarment crap
and stuff
because I still have my hands full
holding onto the five hundred and fifteen dollar favours.

No point in taking a cab

the train stops
i get off
look for a taxi
there are none
i walk into the station
buy a bag of doritos
go to a phone
call for a taxi
wait
ten minutes later
no taxi
wait
another ten minutes
get up
walk outside of the station
keep walking
a taxi passes by
stops at the train station
i keep walking
in the opposite direction
as another person
gets into the taxi
i wave as it passes by
keep walking
see a telephone booth at the corner
walk towards it
slide through the plastic glass doors
pick up the phone
put a quarter in the slot
look around
see a cab coming
turn back to the phone
push a phone number
look up
the taxi isn't stopping at the light
i step outside the booth
and start walking back to the train station
the cab smashes into the phone booth
i step back into the train station
buy a ticket
wait for the next train

Cardigan

Whenever they went out for a walk he would always slide a cardigan around her shoulders. She'd mention that it had been a while since they had been for a walk and he would go over to the closet and take out the powder pink cardigan and slip it around her shoulders. He had been doing this since that one time she had stayed a little too long. But then he had lent her his jacket. No, it wasn't the same thing. It wasn't pink with embroidered yellow daisies. It was big and bulky, his shoulders must have been twice her size. And besides that was only the one time. An accident. She had stayed too long, just a little too long.

And afterwards he lent her his jacket. Slid it around her shoulders. That was the first time he had ever done that and it was all wrong. His jacket too big, and the timing not yet right. They should have waited a few months more. Then her pink cardigan wouldn't fit so tight. She couldn't even do up the buttons anymore. And even though that was okay, now, when she had the ring on her finger, she should not have stayed so late.

And I'm the running target

at first it was a game
of cowboys and indians
but it got pretty serious
when they started using
real arrows
and then I was the only
cowboy left

At the end of the day

Everything I seem to do
offends
and I keep breaking toes
tripping over my tongue

I end up falling back
into the same old traps
and haunts
wondering where I went
wrong
what I said that landed me
back in that place
with my back to the red brick wall
and this girl who was my age
and is my age
still screams at me for something
that I did
but did not know

Here's to the next sweet-thing that comes along

The hammer in my head
doesn't help when I'm trying
to discern the thirsty voices
in the corner
and rap was never my thing
but, baby, I can get in the mood
for anything
with a bottle of beer in my hand.

Somewhere along the way to loneliness

where would we be if I began with “would you like a ham sandwich?” instead of saying I broke my toe when gas was 61.9 cents per litre or gallon or mega-monopoly. what can I say to a girl, when she’s already gone out the door to find some other guy. I was never any good at blind dates. always seem to trip over myself and end up landing flat on my face while she walks out the door again. that would just about capture my life, a picture of me flat on my face and a girl stepping out the door, her face would remain a blank space because of course I never did get to see it, never got the chance to see what I never had.

When at a loss

When the words come to mind
I'll let you know
but until then
it would be so much better
if you would just sit there
and let me think
of how to tell you
what I don't know what to say
that's she's gone
and I don't miss her
and you shouldn't either
now if only you would learn to stop crying mommy
and learn how to say daddy
I really think we'll get along
just fine.

And back in grade six

She was only eleven and didn't really know what she was doing. But she did. Really. Behind the portable she and her friend started kicking a boy. And he laughed at first. Perhaps because the kicks tickled, or because they were not hard enough to cause any pain. And she and her friend laughed too and kept kicking him. But she can't remember if she stopped when he started saying "That's enough" and "Stop". And then "Stop stop stop it". She can't remember when she stopped kicking him. Because in her mind she is still kicking him, even though, now, she would like to stop.

The alarm

You never stopped loving the fact that I had to get up at six in the morning just so you wouldn't have to listen to an alarm. I had become your alarm. And you couldn't stop hating me for that. We were better off with the blinking alarm. But you didn't think so. So the we was not a we at all. It was merely an I who became a commodity. Something of use. Not even human anymore. So in the morning, when I woke up at six, I didn't get you up. I let you sleep while I picked up my packed bags and closed the door behind me.

Now, I hear that you set an alarm. Can't wake up by yourself. I hear you can't sleep by yourself either. I try not to hear these things. But it's like turning off the world trying to tune you out of my life. And I'm not getting anywhere by listening in on these conversations. I was better off as your alarm. Even if you did toss me around a bit. At least you were there. And I didn't have to wake up in a lonely bed. With no one to throw a pillow and whatever else within reach at me.

But, I'm not going to spend the rest of my life waiting for an apology sent in the mail or spoken on the phone. No. I've practically given up on you. It seems you've already put someone else in my place. A place that isn't my place anymore, but hers, whoever she is. And it shouldn't matter. Because I always knew you'd replace me. After all, you only saw me as the alarm. The blinking bloody alarm.

And so it goes

it was slim picking
for those who had missed the spring
they had to wait for the fall
to catch the last bit of 65 degree weather

*

no more of your April kisses
i've moved to a warmer climate
where the kisses taste like June
they certainly taste better than April

*

one night on the couch
is better than three
spent in bed
with you

*

welcome to the wonderful world
of well wishers who stab you in the back
of the neck when you let down your watch
and you land hard in the empty well that they wished you in

*

he was never any good at riddles
to him they all sounded the same
and they all ended in the same way
unsolved

Freddy and Lilia

There was never any need to feel the cold when Freddy was around. He felt it all. He was all weather. When it rained, he cried. When it was hot, he turned red. There was no one quite like him. That's what Jen thought. That's what she kept thinking until he left her. Then there was no use in thinking about him at all. There was no use in calling herself Jen anymore, either. Since her name wasn't Jen, it was Lilia. But that didn't really matter anymore, because no one else knew her real name, not anymore. She had been Jen for so long, so many years that no one could remember her real name. So Lilia did the only sensible thing to do, she stayed Jen. And Freddy did the only thing there was left to do, to make their separation complete. He sent her the divorce papers. And she sent him the rest of his clothes, all the other possessions he had left behind. And he took all the weather with him.

To Jen it never rained anymore, the sun never shone, there was no wind, and it was never too cold, and never hot either. Something had happened to them. Had changed their lives. Twenty-seven years of marriage had given each of them a new identity. Freddy had become all weather and Lilia had changed into Jen. And where their marriage had ended their identities had continued. Freddy became all weather to some other girl. Someone younger, without any wrinkles, who had faithless eyes, unfaithful eyes, that often cuckolded Freddy until he left her too and went on to become all weather to any other girl with an easy smile and open legs.

And Jen went on alone in a weatherless world.

The potential of a nobody

If I had a face to launch a thousand ships
which I don't
I wouldn't need to know the morse code
to send you a message
and I live in a crowded house
with five other girls
you would much rather visit than me
if you knew what I looked like
and that's why we communicate through morse
because I'm no Helen of Troy

I'm as good as the next peach

you keep turning
in circles
by dancing around
the idea
that I'm no worse
than all the other
peaches who you've
been with

Love at loose ends

love at first light
and love at first bright
or love at first fight
is really just love at first quite
or love at first white
and love at the first right
is a love that at first might
be a love at first tight
and love at first kite
is a love at a first height
which leads me to love at first bite
that is really a love at first night
or was it all just love at first sight
and maybe in the end it is all so very, very trite

Waving

As the ship sails and as the waves crash against its bow she waves to no one in particular maybe to the sun in the west but that couldn't be the ship is sailing into the west towards the sun but she keeps waving as if to a ghost as the sun passes the horizon and the sky turns black and only the eyes of the stars seem to notice that she keeps waving.

What I wrote before I had a pencil in my hand

When we sat beside the trees
I realized how blind I had been
To all that you had been to me
Which was hardly anything at all
And when we sat on the bench

In the park where we first ran into one another
Sitting by the trees that I used to call a forest
I could tell that you didn't care much for me either
Just by the way you pulled out a cigarette
And lit it when you knew I hated the smell of smoke

I stopped calling the trees a forest
When you told me it was merely bush
Even though it didn't really matter to you
What I called them
Because you left me at the bench
With a cigarette butt instead of a bouquet

If you lose everything else don't lose the chorus

what are we without our pants on?

I'm as humane as the next guy
but that doesn't mean I'll save your dog
over watering my plant
who's to judge which is more important
what if I told you my plant was a rare tropical breed
while your dog was just another mutt

don't look now but your pants are down

the policeman told me I deserved this ticket
that he gave me
but he doesn't realize that the facts are confusing
especially considering that I'm being fined for going one-hundred and thirty
in a one-hundred speed limit zone
when really I was going eighty-eight on a sixty speed limit road

has anybody seen my pants?

and it's funny when you think of it, really
because that policeman gave the ticket
not because I exceeded the speed limit
but because I ran over his dog

forget about the chorus because it's virtually a screw over

Reading between the lines

there's a girl in a red coat
and the man walking beside her
see, he's really a killer
but she doesn't know that
no, she's just another fool in a dress

Just the smell of it

It all ended when I told you “You stink” and all you could say was, “Me or the outfit?” And when I said “It’s a toss up,” you walked out the door and I didn’t know whether to say good luck or good riddance.

What they left behind

It's amazing to see the many graves dug and filled up that contain parts
 of you left behind And you had only thought of misplacing them
 somewhere When they're really gone and you were just the part that happened to
 move on.

.....
 what they left behind (a different slant)

me and me and scott g, lynne-anne, tino, lisa m, ryan, julie, anton, tina, doug, cheryl b,
 lawrence, nancy, austin, lori, mike d, lisa t, chris b, jessica, patrick, angela, bobby,
 katerina, scott m, heidi, seth, melissa d, mike u, lisa t, david, denise, rodney, cheryl, mike,
 melissa n, rob, bernice, paul, roberta, jeff, shelly, marco, april, tony, lisa l, earl, christina,
 chris s and all the others

I left a part of me with everyone of them

grade school is this unique and horrifying existence

.....
 Are you kidding me? I'm such a dummy. There are so many people who I let hurt me.
 People that don't care because they don't even know that they hurt me. And what's
 worse is that I've done the same to other people and don't even know how to stop hurting
 them, and hurting.

You can't take a pill for this kind of pain. And it never goes away. It just hovers like a
 vulture.

.....
 It's incredible to see the amount of graves I've dug in other people's bodies and left a part
 of me with them. And they don't even know it.

When the music stops

There's no more bopbopbopbop

And there's no more dancing

Just people on the floor

Waiting for the music to start up again

Constructing a scene
(bonus scene in french)

Scene 1

And when he walked in the room and saw her lying on the floor all he could do was stare at the body. Someone handed him a gun and then ran to the window to call for the police and the next thing he could remember was the police banging on the door and someone letting them in and then they were on him. He had dropped the gun and they had grabbed his hands and pulled them behind his back. And all he could think of was the body lying on the ground and how he had never in his life seen that dead girl before.

Scene 2

Dans la salle de bain il y a une toilette et une fille sur la toilette. Elle est morte.
In the washroom there is a toilet and a girl on the toilet. She is dead.

That's what they keep saying

It's only a matter of time. That's what they keep saying. And it's only a matter of a few words spoken. Then it's all over, again. All you have to say is I don't want this anymore, I don't like this anymore, I can't care about you anymore. And then it won't matter, to you, what happens to me.

It's only a matter of time. Before you start looking in another direction. And it's only a matter of walking away. Then it's all over, just like it was, before. All you have to do is let go of my dead hand, turn, and start walking away from me. And then it won't matter, to you, where I'm going.

It's only a matter of time. Then you'll be taking me to the coffee shop. And it's only a matter of taking me there, and then I'll know. It's all over, as I knew it would be, someday. All you have to look like is a little less than innocent, a bit contrite, maybe you could avoid looking at my eyes. And then it won't matter to you, what I look like.

It's only a matter of time. And you'll be gone, just like all the others. And it's only a matter of remembering where all the others took me, and then I'll know. It's all over, for the last time. All you have to buy me is a bunch of flowers, a dozen roses, maybe some carnations. And then it won't matter to you, that you never gave me flowers before, because I said I hated them.

This thing we call love

they finally put me on medication
the day after I died

this thing we call love
it's not what it seems
my wife
was the first to leave
when they the infallible doctors
told me I was sick
and then my kids
Janie and John
walked out the door soon after
and all I had left was the dog
the dog who peed its pants
every time I went near it
no wonder
it was afraid it would catch what I had got
like
my wife, my kids, the other patients
even the doctors were afraid
it was catchy
so they all left
and then the dog went too
and left me
holding onto the soiled blanket
and to the cancer
the only things that seemed to care
when I closed my eyes
and never opened them again
the doctors gave me my first treatment of chemo
the day after the insurance finally kicked in
when my family came to claim the body
I never forgot their fond farewell

I'm on pins and needles here

gone fishing without a rod
somewhere in India
and do they even have fish
in India, during the drought?
that's what the guide asks
me, when he's the one
whose supposed to show me
where all the fish are

The dumbness of slumber

he used to shake her awake
and she'd scream out
all of the terror of her dream
and she'd go on screaming
until she fell back into sleep
and he fell back into the quiet background
she was great asleep, because it kept her hushed
but awake all the horrors of her dreams
shouted back at him
made him guilty about letting her sleep
so he'd shake her awake
to stop feeling guilty
to let her cry out of the silence of her dreams

No friend to the dead

your tongue is no friend
because it keeps digging
up buried graves
when you tell me
every bad thing you've
ever heard about your
kin

In such cases

The thin and the thick of it is
you only have so much skin
and really it is so thin
just like you so terribly thin
and the thick of it is
that you're just too thin to live
that's what the doctors told your mother
you were too thin to make it in this type of world
three dimensional to the two dimensional you

In pursuit of silence

All he ever wanted was a little quiet
just some peace and quiet
but they were never quiet
always screaming
and screaming
the noise of it all
and even now when he was holding another one of them he could still hear them all
screaming
just like when he was little and he could hear the little lambs
screaming before the slaughter
but after it was so quiet
so peaceful and quiet

Just another night in bed

Hon. Hey, Hon. You awake?

No, Sweetie. I had my eyes closed because I was meditating. That's what I do every night. I close my eyes so I can meditate.

Hon. The kids are asleep.

I know, I put them to bed.

Well?

Well?

Well, I thought since the kids are already sleeping. And it's still pretty early, that...

I'm on my period.

You're always on your period. You should go see the doctor.

I did.

And... What did he say?

He told me I was going through a stage.

A stage?

You know, like the kids go through.

The kids go through stages?

Remember when Kate used to talk to her food?

She talked to her food?

At supper, she'd call the corn (Mister), and the chicken (Aunt).

You never notice anything, dear. It's just work, supper, and bed for you.

Well, did you get a second opinion?

No. I didn't, I didn't need a second opinion to know that Kate was talking to her food.

No, I mean, did you get a second opinion about your period?

Sure I did. I went to your doctor. He said if he were me he'd hang himself.

Would you?

I'm thinking about it.

About what?

About hanging myself.

Let's not consider it. There must be something else we could do.

Sure, I could have an affair with your doctor.

No. That wouldn't resolve anything. How about the pill? Did either of the doctors suggest it?

You know I can't swallow pills, Sweetie, I'd choke.

Well, at least it would save you from hanging yourself.

We're not going to get into this again, are we?

I'm merely suggesting that if you'd just try the pill then maybe it could regulate your period a little. So we could...you know....

How sensitive. I'm in the middle of my period and you have to bring up sex.

When I could cry from my swelling ovaries ready to explode out of my stomach.

Okay. Forget it.

Okay. Forget it.

Alright. Goodnight, Sweetie.

The doctor really said you were just going through a stage?

Relax, dear. I'm not on my period. I just have a headache.

That's lovely

I tripped over
your eyes
the other day.

Came across
your picture lying
around somewhere.

Just like you to
lie there.

Half dressed.

Half naked.

Half empty, really.

All the paint drained
from your face.

You must have been
crying again when

I had the picture made.

A piece of breakneck bracing nothing

will you marry me, she said?

the duke replied. this is a farce. it's as plain as the peanut butter. i don't want to marry you. merry you gives me nothing like a marry feeling. my cook would sooner serve as a bride than you.

and the pickles spilled all over the floor again. it must have been the cook. her reaction towards the proposal. which was no proposal at all. nothing to reply to.

as if the duke were worth having dirty pickles. no. he certainly was not. and the cook regretted the spilling of them. those spilling pickles cost her dearly. her job. her citizenship. and her new pair of sneakers. she had to sell them to get the money to make the trip back home to her pickle-man.

she, the will you marry me, became the cook and married the duke.

and found he was not worth the having.

All smiles

I used to smile at you
before you noticed me
we were happy then
you not seeing me
and I looking at you
but not now
you had to look at me
look at me so hard
my face almost broke
and your look
was nothing like kindness
so now I don't smile at all
not at you
not at anyone
anymore

Coughing up feeling

You try to tell me
what isn't even in your eyes
and I force myself to believe
for just a few minutes
that you're not lying to me
again
that you haven't been seeing her again
when I know perfectly well
that you are
even when your lips cough up all this love stuff
your eyes are looking in another direction
following the girl who just passed by
and you ask me to believe you for once
when you can't even look me in the eyes
so I'll walk away
before I have to tape sucker to my forehead

Getting married

This wedding you speak of
has got a hold of my liver
and done quite a job on it,
if it gets any worse
the doctors tell me
they'll resort to operating
and I'll be giving donations
of one heart, two kidneys,
a set of lungs, but no liver
that

I get to take with me,
as sort of a bonus,
to the grave
along with this wedding
which you so fondly
speak of,
and of which,
unfortunately,
I take a part in.

Cup of coffee

if i had never been born
my sister would not have had a sister
who followed her everywhere and
repeated everything she said
who hugged too much
and ate too little

if he had never asked me
out for a cup of coffee
he would never have ended it
over a cup of coffee
and i would have never regretted
living as i do now

the wind chimes and wind dials
would not miss me
they would only miss the wind
if it ever stopped
and the cigarette butt on the ground
has no thoughts of ever sending a flower my way

the corn in the field only has thoughts concerning
the harvest
it is time to be sheared
it wouldn't remember the five year old who brought popsicles
and the mulberry tree does not miss
the five foot eight climber

And the poets call it love, no wonder they starve

if I broke your heart
and gave you mine
do remember to forgive me
the breaking

and I'd like to believe
that I'm winning you over
to pretend that this is
our happy end

but you leave me alone
and I'm like a desert
without the one
I call you

Vita Auctoris

Janet Lynne Clare Cincurak was born September 6, 1978, at Metropolitan hospital in Windsor, Ontario. She grew up on a small farm in the township of Maidstone and attended St. Peter's Elementary School from 1983 to 1992. In 1997 she graduated from St. Anne's Secondary School and went on to the University of Windsor to begin an undergraduate degree in English Literature and Creative Writing, which she completed in 2001. She is currently finishing her Master's degree in English Literature and Creative Writing and will be in the state of wedded bliss on May 31, 2003.